

# Natural Vegetation

A community of a plant that has grown naturally without the aid of human beings is known as 'Natural Vegetation'. Moreover, it has been left undisturbed by humans. In simple terms, the area that is not exploited by humans. Our country India ranks 12 among the other mega bio-diverse nations in the world. India has a total of 47,000 plant species, ranking 10th in the whole world and 4th in Asia. There are about 15,000 flowering plants which account for 6 percent of the total flowering plants in the whole world. India has around 90,000 species of animals that also account for the natural vegetation.

The soil, climate and topography are the major factors that influence and affect the natural vegetation of India. Rainfall and temperature are the main climatic factors. Moreover, the amount of rainfall (measured in cm) plays a significant role. Likewise, the temperature is an important factor in hilly regions and the himalayas (elevation of more than 900 meters). Soil and topography equally play a determining factor in a few regions of the country. For example, mangrove forests and swamp forests are deeply influenced by the soil. Similarly, the tidal forests and the alpine flora is influenced by the topography.

## Types of Natural Vegetation in India

There are various types of natural vegetation in India based on the annual and spatial variation of the rainfall. Depending on different climatic variations, the natural vegetation of India can be classified into various types. Broadly there are 5 different **types of vegetation** in India which are as follows:

1. Tropical Evergreen Forests
2. Tropical Deciduous Forests (Monsoon Forests)
3. Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs
4. Mountain Forests
5. Mangrove Forests (Tidal Forests)

Below we will discuss all these types of vegetation in India in detail.

### Tropical Evergreen Forests

The tropical evergreen forest is one of the types of natural vegetation which is found in the region that receives more than 200 cm of rainfall.

- The tropical evergreen rainforest can widely be found in the regions of Meghalaya Nagaland, the Western Ghats, and the islands of Andaman and Nicobar groups.
- Apart from that the tropical evergreen rainforest can be found in the Hills of Jaintia and Khasi as well. The pace of growth of trees in these regions is very fast and the predominant trees are Bamboo, Sandalwood, Garjan and Mahogany.
- Its abundant Flora which includes trees, bushes and creepers of various types gives it a multilayered structure.
- The tropical evergreen forests are home to many wildlife creatures. The most prevalent creatures in these locations are monkeys, lemurs, and elephants. Besides this a wide

variety of insects and birds can be spotted in these forests like sloths, scorpions, snails etc. One horned rhinoceros can also be found in the forest of Bengal and Assam.

- The tropical evergreen forest can further be divided into three types of natural vegetation which are,
  - Moist Evergreen Forest, found in Western Ghats North East region and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The trees of moist evergreen forest are more than 60m tall.
  - Semi Evergreen Forest, found in Eastern Himalayas, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Western Ghats. The main species found in semi evergreen forest is white cedar.
  - Dry Evergreen Forests, found in the foothills of Himalayas and Shivalik Hills and some parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The trees found in dry evergreen forest are white Shiny and have a varnished look like Olive and pomegranate.

## Tropical Deciduous Forests (Monsoon Forests)

Tropical deciduous forests are the most widespread natural vegetation found in India. The tropical deciduous forests are also called the monsoon forest which can be spotted in the regions that receive rainfall between 70 cm to 200 cm.

- It is the speciality of the trees found in These areas that they shed out their leaves every 6 to 8 weeks in summer.
- The deciduous forests are widely found in the regions of lower slope of Himalayas and Chhattisgar, Bihar, Karnataka, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and their surrounding regions.
- The most prominent trees found in these areas of natural vegetation are Blue Gum, Pal Ash, Sal, Sandalwood, Arjun, Ebony, Bamboo, and Teak. The predominant species in the forest is Teak.
- These words are further split into wet and dry deciduous depending on the availability of water supply.
- The common animals found in the monsoon forest are Elephant, Pig, Lion, Tiger, Deer along with a wide variety of birds and insects. Terrestrial tortoises are also found in some parts of the forests.
- The tropical deciduous forest can further be divided into two types of natural vegetation:
  - The Moist deciduous forests, found in the radius of Orissa Easter slopes of Western Ghat, some of the North Eastern states and foothills of Himalayas. The most popular trees found in These areas are Mahua, Amla, Kusum, and Sandalwood.
  - Dry deciduous forest is found in the entire Northern part of the country except North East along with some states of Central India and South India like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu. The main trees found in these forests are Axlewood, Bel, Amaltas and Tendu.

## Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs

Thorny trees and shrubs makeup the natural vegetation in areas that receive rainfall less than 70 cm. The height of these trees do not go beyond 10 m.

- This is the very hard kind of natural vegetation that can be found in the semi-arid North Western areas of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- The predominant plant species include Cactus Euphoria, Palms etc. There are many trees and their extensive roots reach far into the ground to obtain the moisture for living.

This is because the stems of these plants are succulents in nature and save the water for surviving.

- To reduce the amount of evaporation and loss of moisture from the plants, leaves are typically thick in size and have spines in addition.
- A number of small and big animals are found in these forests like mice, rats, wolves, tigers, horses and camels.
- Some of the important trees that grow in this type of natural vegetation are Babul, Khair, Neem, Khejri, Palas, Ber, Kokko etc.

## Mountain Forests

The forests found in the mountain regions are called montane forests. The types of natural vegetation forests found in the mountain regions differ at every slope.

- The average height of the forests found in Himalayan region can reach up to the height of 1500 mt or more.
- The most common types of trees found in the Himalayan regions are Pine, Sal, teak, Bamboo, etc. These forests can be found in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- Apart from this some temperate Conifer trees, Oak trees, Fir trees can be found on the higher slopes of Himalayan region. Rhododendrons are the trees found at the more elevated slopes of Himalayas. Alpine Meadows may be seen beyond these natural vegetation zones all the way to the snowfields.
- Animals like Kashmiri Stag, Spotted Deer, Jack Rabbit, Tibetan Antelope, Leopards, Bear and Red Pandas can be found in the mountain forest in different regions.
- The Mountain Forests can further be divided into three types of natural vegetation called,
  - Montane Wet Temperate Forests, found in the North East region of Nepal To Arunachal Pradesh that receives the minimum rainfall of 200cm. The height of the slope of the mountain best for these forests ranges between 1800 to 3000 m.
  - Montane Subtropical Forest, found in the regions of Northwest Himalayas like Himachal Pradesh Arunachal Pradesh Sikkim except for Kashmir and Ladakh. The main trees found in these regions are Pine, Oak, Rhododendrons, and Jamun.
  - Himalayan Moist Forests, found in the region of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, hilly areas of West Bengal and some parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The main trees found in this region are Chestnut, Sal Shrubs and other nutritional grasses.

## Mangrove Forests (Tidal Forests)

Mangrove forests are also known as tidal forests that develop along the coast side and borders of deltas of rivers like Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Mahanadi, and Ganga.

- These forests are also known as Sundarbans in the regions of West Bengal. The largest trees found in these natural vegetation are known as Sundari.
- Garal, Kasur, and Hogla and other significant trees may be found in the tidal forests. These trees and all of these forests are very significant to the forestry industry as these woods provide for fuel and lumber.
- The beauty of the coastal areas of India are enhanced by the presence of coconut trees and Palm trees.
- These mangrove forests are home to various animals like Royal Bengal Tiger, Turtles, and a variety of Snakes and crocodiles.